

Hispanic People and Events on United States Postage Stamps



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Hispanic contributions to the history and culture of the United States, and to Central and South America as well, date back to pre-colonial times. It seems difficult to imagine that, while Pilgrims were disembarking from the *Mayflower* on Plymouth Rock, cities were already expanding in Florida, the Southwest, and the Caribbean. In recognition of this heritage, the United States has portrayed a number of Hispanic persons and events on its postage stamps.





Landing of Columbus

The design of the first such stamp, the 15-cent Landing of Columbus issue. In 1869, it was taken from John Vanderlyn's painting *Landing of Columbus*, which hangs in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol. It shows the Spanish-sponsored explorer and a party from the *Santa María* landing on San Salvador and being greeted by natives bearing gifts of fruit.



Columbian Series

In 1893, during the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, a special series of 16 postage items honoring the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America was issued. Each stamp denomination in the Columbian Series, from 1 cent through \$5, depicted a different scene commemorating events related to Columbus's discovery of America under the patronage of Spanish Queen Isabella I.



David G. Farragut

Admiral David G. Farragut was an American seaman

of Spanish descent who won fame in the Civil War Battle of Mobile Bay, and two stamps were issued in his honor. A \$1 stamp featuring Farragut alone was issued in 1903, and a 3-cent stamp issued in 1937 depicted Farragut with his foster brother, Admiral David D. Porter. Charles Schlecht designed the 3-cent stamp and A.R. Meissner designed the higher value stamp.



Panama Pacific Exposition Issues

In 1913, a series of stamps was issued in

denominations of 1, 2, 5, and 10 cents to commemorate the opening of the Panama Canal and the discovery of the Pacific Ocean. The stamps were placed on sale in San Francisco, California. The 1-cent version honored the Spanish explorer, Vasco Núñez de Balboa, who discovered the western coast of Central America and became the first European to gaze upon the waters of the Pacific Ocean. C.A. Huston designed this stamp.



Territorial Issues

The late President Franklin D.

Roosevelt, an avid stamp collector, proposed the design for the first commemorative stamp featuring the island of Puerto Rico. In 1937, Roosevelt suggested to Postmaster General James A. Farley that La Fortaleza, the governor's residence, should appear on the Puerto Rico stamp as part of the Territorial Issues. The issues also featured the U.S. Virgin Islands, Hawaii, and Alaska. Originally a fort when it was constructed in 1540, La Fortaleza is the oldest executive mansion still in use in the Western Hemisphere. The 3-cent stamp, designed by William Schrage and William Roach, was issued November 25, 1937, in San Juan, Puerto Rico.



Panama Canal

The 25th anniversary of the opening of the Panama Canal was marked with a stamp

issued August 15, 1939, aboard the *USS Charleston*, which was passing through the canal gates at that time. Again, William A. Roach designed this 3-cent stamp featuring portraits of former President Theodore Roosevelt on the left and General George W. Goethals on the right, with a reproduction of a steamship passing through the Gaillard Cut in the center.



John Philip Sousa

The famous American composer and bandmaster John Philip Sousa was honored on a 2-cent stamp designed by Roach and issued on May 3, 1940, in Sousa's birthplace, Washington, D.C. Antonio Sousa, the composer's father, was born in Spain, where his parents had fled from Portugal during the revolution of 1822.



Pan-American Union

A 3-cent commemorative stamp honoring the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Pan-American Union was issued April 14, 1940, in the nation's capital. The bonds of friendship and goodwill that existed at that time among the countries of North, South, and Central America were symbolically represented by the clasped hands of the Three Graces, which designer Roach took from Botticelli's painting *Spring*.



Coronado Expedition

In connection with the 400th anniversary of

Spanish explorer Francisco Vázquez de Coronado's expedition through the American Southwest, a 3-cent stamp was released September 7, 1940. V.S. McCloskey, Jr., included in his design of the stamp a reproduction of a painting by Gerald Cassidy titled *Coronado and his Captains*. The stamp was issued in Albuquerque, New Mexico.



Puerto Rico Election

To celebrate the first Puerto Rican gubernatorial

election, a 3-cent stamp was issued in San Juan, the island's capital, on April 27, 1949. C.R. Chickering featured in the design a rural Puerto Rican called a *jíbaro*, holding a cogwheel symbolizing industry and a ballot box representing the election of Governor Luis Muñoz Marín on January 2, 1949. Muñoz, a journalist and a poet, conceived the political philosophy that led to granting the island commonwealth status, which it still has.



Gadsden Purchase

Another 3-cent stamp designed by Chickering marked

the centennial of the Gadsden Purchase. The stamp was first placed on sale in Tucson, Arizona, on December 30, 1953. In 1853, James Gadsden, the U.S. Minister to Mexico, signed a treaty with that country agreeing to pay \$10 million for a strip of land that is now largely the state of Arizona. The Gadsden Purchase created our southwestern boundary with Mexico and represented the last major addition of territory to the United States.



The Alamo

Three years later, on June 14, 1956, the 9-cent Alamo stamp, also designed by

Chickering, was issued in San Antonio, Texas. The historic 18th-century Franciscan mission symbolizes the spirit of determination and resistance of 189 Texans who fought for their independence from Mexico. The Texas Revolution was not simply a fight between Anglo-American settlers and Mexican troops. It was a revolt against what was regarded as tyrannical rule from a distant source. Many of the leaders in the revolution and many of the armed settlers were Mexican. The Alamo had been featured previously on the Texas Centennial stamp issued March 2, 1936.



Simón Bolívar

Stamps of 8- and 4-cent denominations, the second issued in the Champions of Liberty Series, honored Simón Bolívar, the South American general known as *El Libertador*. His victories won independence from Spain for Bolivia (named in his honor), Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela. The stamps were issued in Washington, D.C., on July 24, 1958.



José de San Martín

The Champions of Liberty Series also paid tribute to another Hispanic, General José de San Martín, a soldier and statesman who was responsible for bringing freedom to his native Argentina as well as to Chile and Peru. He was regarded as a farsighted and upright statesman, possessing a prophetic vision combined with one of the truly notable organizations in military history. Two stamps with denominations of 4 cents and 8 cents were issued in his honor on February 25, 1959, in Washington, D.C. Arnold Copeland and Ervine Metzl, who also designed the Bolívar stamps, collaborated on the designs.



Palace of the Governors

Tyler Dingee designed the stamp commemorating

America's oldest public building, the Palace of Governors, in Santa Fe, New Mexico. A 1¼-cent stamp was issued there on June 17, 1960. The building, now a museum, was constructed by Spanish settlers in 1610 and was the seat of government in New Mexico until 1901. During those years, the flags of Spain, Mexico, the Confederacy, and the United States flew over this historic structure.



Mexican Independence

To mark the 150th anniversary of Mexican independence, the United States and Mexico jointly issued stamps with the same basic design on September

16, 1960. Mexican designer León Helguera was responsible for the Spanish version and Chickering rendered the American 4-cent version. Los Angeles, California, was designated as the first day city because of its great concentration of Americans of Mexican origin.



Alliance for Progress

A 5-cent commemorative stamp was issued

in Washington, D.C., on August 17, 1963, marking the second anniversary of the establishment of the Alliance for Progress. An international economic development program established by the United States and 22 Latin American countries, the Alliance aimed at achieving social justice for all people of the Americas. The design of the stamp, by William K. Schrage, was based on the official emblem of the organization.



Settlement of Florida

A 5-cent stamp designed by Brook Temple marked the 400th anniversary of St. Augustine, Florida, the first continuous Spanish settlement in the New World. It was issued there on August 28, 1965. Spanish

admiral Don Pedro Menéndez de Avilés founded St. Augustine in 1565, naming it in honor of the saint on whose feast day the settlement was established. A stamp identical except for the necessary differences in language and denomination was released by Spain at the same time.



California Settlement

On July 16, 1969, a 6-cent stamp was issued to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the settlement of California. The first day ceremony was held in San Diego, where the first of 21 missions and presidios began the Spanish colonization. It was there that a Spanish expedition under Gaspar de Portola, accompanied by Father Junípero Serra, settled in 1769. Leonard Buckley and Howard Mildner, both of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, based their design on the belfry of the mission at Carmel, California, where Father Serra is buried.



San Juan Commemorative

Founded in 1521, San Juan, Puerto Rico, is the oldest city flying the American flag. An 8-cent stamp commemorating San Juan's 450th anniversary was released September 12, 1971, the opening day of that year's National Governors' Conference. The stamp design features a sentry box at San Juan's famed El Morro Castle, which symbolizes Puerto Rico to the rest of the world. In order to capture the 16th-century atmosphere, Walter Brooks executed his design as a woodcut.



San Xavier del Bac Mission

San Xavier del Bac Mission, located on what today is the Pápago Indian Reservation in Tucson, Arizona, was depicted in a block of four Historic Preservation stamps designed by Melbourne Brindle and issued in San Diego, California, on October 29, 1971. Known as the “White Dove of the Desert,” this mission, a masterpiece of Spanish Colonial architecture, has served the local Pápago tribe since its founding in 1692 by Jesuit Father Kino. The present domed building — part Moorish, part Byzantine — was begun in 1783 by Franciscan monks and is now an adobe jumble of frescos, carved saints, and two lions (representing Castile), which are often decked with white satin bow ties. The Mission of San Xavier del Bac today endures as a haunting example of Tucson’s heritage.



Alta California

The founding of the first civil settlement in Alta (upper) California by Spain in 1777, at what is now the site of the city of San José, had a profound influence on the development of the West Coast and of the entire United States. As the founding of the Plymouth Colony dominated the history of the East Coast, so did the founding of El Pueblo de San José de Guadalupe dominate the history of the West Coast. The

chain of eight missions and presidios established before 1777 in Alta California proved inadequate to secure the territory from invasion and starvation, so Spain moved to establish a permanent civilian population capable of producing food and goods for the missions and presidios. Alta California included the present states of California, Nevada, Utah, and Arizona as well as parts of Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico. The 13-cent stamp, issued in San Jose on September 9, 1977, commemorated the bicentennial year of the establishment of the civil settlements in Alta California as opposed to the military posts that had preceded them. In the design, Earl Thollander depicted dwellings reminiscent of the era.



General Bernardo de Gálvez

General Bernardo de Gálvez was honored with a 15-cent stamp issued on the 234th anniversary of his birth, July 23, 1980, in New Orleans, Louisiana. With it,

the Postal Service paid tribute to an unsung hero who had made a major contribution to the winning of the American Revolution. General Gálvez was appointed governor of Spanish Louisiana during the Revolutionary War. He organized a military force and successfully launched campaigns against the British in Louisiana and West Florida. His victories contributed significantly to the struggle for American independence by denying the strategic Mississippi River Valley to the British.

The Gálvez stamp was designed by Roy H. Andersen and was based upon a photograph of the statue of General Gálvez that stands in Spanish Plaza in Mobile, Alabama.



Ponce de León

Juan Ponce de León began his career of exploration in 1493 as a member of

Christopher Columbus's second expedition to the New World. Nine years later, he traveled to the West Indies. In 1508 and 1509, he explored and settled Puerto Rico, founding the island's oldest settlement, Caparra, near what is now San Juan. Ponce de León served as the island's first governor. Royal orders to colonize new lands and to acquire additional sources of gold, combined with the desire to discover the legendary Fountain of Youth, led to his discovery of Florida in 1513. A 20-cent stamp honoring Ponce DE León was issued in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on Columbus Day, October 12, 1982, during ESPAMER '82, a major international philatelic exhibition.



Roberto Clemente

The fourth stamp issued in the American Sports Series honored baseball star Roberto Clemente. It was issued on August 18, 1984, in Carolina, Puerto Rico, the place of his birth.

In the United States, Clemente is best remembered for his illustrious career with the Pittsburgh Pirates. During his 18 seasons, he batted .317, was 12 times a National Baseball League all-star, and became only the eleventh player in major league history to record 3,000 hits. In his native Puerto Rico, Clemente is best remembered as a humanitarian. On New Year's Eve, 1972, he died tragically in an airplane crash while attempting to deliver supplies to victims of an earthquake in Nicaragua. The stamp design was unveiled at Yankee Stadium in New York City in September 1982. Graphic artist Juan López Bonilla, a native of Puerto Rico, designed this colorful 20-cent stamp honoring the first Hispanic inducted into Baseball's Hall of Fame.



Hispanic Americans

President Ronald Reagan and Postmaster General William F. Bolger

presided over a first day of issue ceremony at the White House, where a 20-cent stamp was issued October 31, 1984. The stamp honored the contributions of Hispanic Americans to national security and the overall development of the United States. Deeply committed to the principles of freedom, courageous Hispanics have served with valor on the battlefield and with distinction on the home front for more than two centuries. Thirty-seven have received the highest decoration our nation can bestow on its heroes — the Medal of Honor. In addition, men and women of Hispanic origin have made significant

contributions to the arts and sciences, music, athletics, philosophy, and numerous other areas. Today, the legacy and achievements of the Hispanic community have become an important part of the heritage we all share as American citizens. Veteran stamp artist Robert McCall of Paradise Valley, Arizona, featured several Hispanic men and women in uniform representing each branch of the military. A young boy and girl appear in the background as symbols of a promising future.



Padre Junípero Serra

Miguel José Serra grew up among the peasants of his

home, Mallorca, and received his early education in the cathedral schools at the island's nearby capital city of Palma. His investiture of the Franciscan habit was on September 14, 1730.

After 17 years in Palma, he took the opportunity to be a missionary by joining several lifelong friends and going to Mexico. The group arrived in Veracruz on December 9, 1749, and Junípero walked the entire distance to the College of San Fernando in Mexico City, nearly 200 miles away. He arrived in Mexico City on January 1, 1750.

The visitador general of New Spain, José Gálvez, formulated a plan to conquer Alta California to defend against the Russians and the British. With troops under Gaspar de Portola, Serra and his friars went north to found Mission San Diego de Alcalá on July 1, 1769. After that

time, 21 California missions were founded by the Franciscans. Father Serra directed the building of San Carlos Borromeo on Mission Bay on June 3, 1770, with Portala's help. From 1771 to 1782, he saw seven more major missions built. He died at and is buried by the altar of Mission San Carlos Borromeo del Rio Carmelo. Serra is remembered on a 1985 44-cent airmail stamp.



Luis Muñoz Marín

Luis Muñoz Marín was the son of publisher and patriot Luis Muñoz Rivera, who led the autonomist movement in pursuing Puerto Rico's autonomy from Spain before the U.S. takeover. Muñoz Marín grew up in Puerto Rico and in Washington, D.C., where his father was the island's resident commissioner until he died in 1916. Muñoz Marín attended Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., where he studied law.

He advocated Puerto Rican independence from the United States and espoused socialism. In 1926 he returned to Puerto Rico to edit his father's newspaper, *La Democracia*, later called *Diario de Puerto Rico*. He left the paper in 1928, but returned when he was elected to the Puerto Rican Senate in 1932 on the Liberal Party ticket.

Muñoz Marín was elected the first governor and was reelected three more times in 1952, 1956, and 1960. He was effective in changing the island's status. Luis Muñoz Marín appears on a 5-cent stamp issued in 1990 as part of the Great Americans Series.



Dennis Chavez

Dennis Chavez was born of Spanish-American parents in the village of his own name, Los Chavez, in Valencia County, New Mexico. Los Chavez was a town of fewer than 500 people, located some 30 miles south of Albuquerque.

Chavez quit school at age 13 to work in politics. He helped a local Democratic office seeker, even though Chavez himself was too young to cast a vote. For his work, Chavez was awarded a clerkship in Washington, D.C., to assist Senator Andrieus A. Jones, who needed a Spanish-speaking interpreter in his 1916 campaign. This experience encouraged him to pursue the fields of law and political science. Chavez attended Georgetown University from 1917 to 1920 and was awarded a Bachelor of Laws degree. He was admitted to the bar. He returned to Albuquerque to begin his practice and to serve in the state legislature. He represented New Mexico in the U.S. Congress for two terms, from 1931 to 1934. In 1935, he was appointed to fill a vacant seat in the Senate, which made up for his senatorial election loss in 1934. In 1936, he was elected to return to that seat, and was reelected in 1940, 1946, and 1952.

In 1991, a 35-cent Great Americans stamp was issued to honor Chavez.



Christopher Columbus

In 1509, Christopher Columbus's body was removed to

Seville, Spain. His remains were shipped to Santo Domingo (now the Dominican Republic) and entombed in the cathedral. Columbus was Italian but spent his adult life in the service of Castile. However, he retained his Genoese citizenship.

In the early 1480s, he made a voyage with the fleet of Diego d'Azambuja to the Gulf of Guinea. This voyage was the beginning of his urge for discovery. It took him eight years of supplication to acquire three ships and 90 men from Ferdinand and Isabella to prove his theory that the Earth was round. His correspondence with the Florentine physician and cosmographer Paolo Tosconelli inspired him to search for Asia (Cathay) by sailing west.

On his first voyage in 1492, he came to an island (probably Watling in the Bahamas). Bearing the royal standard of Castile, he took the island in the name of the king and queen, and named it San Salvador. He returned to Spain in the *Niña*. Three more voyages followed. Many of his people remained in the New World to colonize it. He never found his Cathay.

The landing of Columbus and his party was depicted on the 15-cent 1869 stamp and reissued in 1992 as a \$5 stamp.



Diego Columbus

Diego Columbus was the son of Domenico Colombo, a wool weaver, and

Susanna, whose father was also a wool weaver. Christoforo (Christopher) was the oldest of the Colombo (Columbus) children. Diego was 17 years younger than Christopher, who was born in 1451. Diego went with Columbus on his second voyage.

Diego is seen standing with his brother Christopher in chains on the \$2 stamp of the Columbian series issued January 2, 1893, and reissued in 1992 as a \$2 commemorative stamp.



Bartholomew Columbus

Bartholomew Columbus was the third son of

Domenico and Susanna Colombo (Columbus). He was a chartmaker and went to Lisbon, Portugal, to ply his trade.

Bartholomew is seen standing in chains with his brothers Christopher and Diego on the \$2 stamp of the Columbian series issued January 2, 1893, and reissued in 1992 as a \$2 commemorative stamp.



Juan Pérez

From what little is known about his life, one can only surmise the

approximate birth and death dates of Fray Juan Pérez. In his youth, Juan Pérez had belonged to the Crown's *contadores*, the state accounting office. He probably was born somewhere in Castile.

On the 30-cent stamp of the 1893 Columbian issue, Pérez is shown at the table on the extreme left. The stamp was reissued in 1992 as a 30-cent commemorative stamp.



Vicente Yáñez Pinzón

Vicente Yáñez Pinzón was the younger brother of

Martín Alonso Pinzón. Vicente was a member of the famous maritime family of Pinzóns of Palos de la Frontera. This family, the Niños, and the Quinteros were instrumental in furnishing ships for Christopher Columbus's first voyage in search of the Indies. Vicente was in charge of the *Niña*.

He is seen in the left center of the 2-cent Columbian stamp. He is holding the first flag to the left. This commemorative stamp was reissued in 1992 as a 2-cent stamp.



Martín Alonso Pinzón

Three prominent maritime families of Palos — the Quinteros and especially the Niños and the Pinzóns — made it possible for Christopher Columbus to outfit and man his ships for the great voyage west. Martín Alonso Pinzón commanded the *Pinta* and took his younger brother Francisco Pinzón on as the ship's master.

He is depicted in the center of the 15-cent 1869 stamp. He is holding the second flag. This stamp was reissued in 1992 as a 29-cent commemorative stamp.



Rodrigo de Escobedo (Escobar)

Aboard the *Santa María*, the flagship under the command of Christopher Columbus, was a legal officer or notary by the name of Rodrigo de Escobedo or Escobar, who was to witness any discoveries, make proper records and deeds, and make official all transactions in the name of Spain.

The ships *Santa María*, *Niña*, and *Pinta* sailed on September 6, 1492, from the Old World to the New World, arriving at Guanahani Island on October 12. Escobedo duly witnessed the great event. The site was called Fernandez Bay.

Escobedo is seen in the center of the painting *Landing of Columbus* by John Vanderlyn. He is standing directly behind Columbus, which indicates his importance. The painting was

selected for the 15-cent Columbian stamp issued April 2, 1869. This stamp was reissued in 1992 as a 29-cent commemorative stamp.



Rodrigo Sánchez

Rodrigo Sánchez, the royal comptroller, was to see to it that an accounting was made of all the riches acquired from the East. Sánchez was to make certain that Columbus adhered to the capitulations made between the sovereigns and himself in April 1492.

Sánchez is depicted as the first person to the right of the center flag bearer (Martín Alonso Pinzón) in John Vanderlyn's painting *Landing of Columbus* on the 15-cent stamp issued April 2, 1869. This stamp was reissued in 1992 as a 29-cent commemorative stamp.



Alonso de Ojeda

Alonso de Ojeda sailed with Columbus in 1493 on Columbus's second voyage. Ojeda sailed again in 1499 and 1500, along with Amerigo Vespucci and Juan de la Cosa.

He is pictured in John Vanderlyn's *Landing of Columbus* painting on the 15-cent Columbian stamp issued April 2, 1869. He is standing behind and to the left of the flag, wearing a feather in his hat and shouldering a gun. This stamp was reissued in 1992 as a 29-cent commemorative stamp.



Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo

Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo was probably born in Portugal. This is conjecture since nothing is recorded of him before 1520, when he was in service with Pánfilo de Narváez. He left

Narváez at Veracruz to take part in the conquest of Mexico with Hernán Cortés.

In 1541, Antonio de Mendoza, viceroy of New Spain, assigned two ships to Cabrillo to carry on the Pacific Coast exploration. The following year, 1542, Cabrillo sighted what later became San Diego, San Pedro Bay in Long Beach, Santa Catalina Island, Santa Monica Bay, and Santa Barbara Channel and its islands. He went north to what we know now as Monterey Bay and up the coast as far as Point Reyes, just north of present-day San Francisco's Golden Gate, which he failed to see. Cabrillo is honored with a 1992, 29-cent commemorative stamp.



Ritchie Valens

Ritchie Valens, born Richard Valenzuela in 1941 in Pacoima, California, was an early

Latin rock and rhythm composer and singer. A self-taught musician, he played a homemade electric guitar until he could afford a new instrument. He was front man at 16 with a Mexican band and sang on Dick Clark's *American Bandstand*. He died at 18 in the same airplane crash that killed Buddy Holly.

On June 16, 1993, in Cleveland, Ohio, and Santa Monica, California, the United States Postal Service celebrated rock 'n' roll and rhythm 'n' blues music with the issuance of seven 29-cent commemorative stamps that feature seven legendary ambassadors of rock and soul. Ritchie Valens is remembered on one of these stamps.



500th Anniversary of Columbus's Landing in Puerto Rico

A 29-cent postage stamp, commemorating the historic landing of Columbus on the western coast of Puerto Rico, was issued November 19, 1993, in San Juan, Puerto Rico, marking the island's quincentennial celebration.

The Columbus Landing in Puerto Rico stamp was designed by Richard Schlecht of Arlington, Virginia. The scenic design depicts two caravel ships approaching the Puerto Rican shore. Columbus used both caravel and naval vessels on his voyages.



Padre Félix Varela

Born in 1788, Padre Félix Varela helped poor minorities living in New York City in the early 1820s and founded nurseries and orphanages for the children of poor widows. He organized the New York Catholic Temperance Association and virtually lived in hospitals while caring for cholera victims during an epidemic in 1832. Because of his abilities and

dedication, Varela was named Vicar General of the New York diocese.

Varela also founded the first Spanish newspaper in the U.S., publishing essays and articles about human rights injustices suffered by minorities, religious tolerance, cooperation between English and Spanish-speaking communities, and the importance of education.

Before coming to the U.S., Varela was named Professor of Philosophy of the Seminary of San Carlos in Havana, Cuba, where he quickly distinguished himself as a great educator. During his professional career, Varela introduced numerous innovations in teaching and defending the principle — then considered strange — of giving women the same education as men.

Varela spent his last years in the city of St. Augustine, Florida, where he retired due to illness. He died in 1853, but his legacy endures in the U.S.-based work of two foundations named in his honor.



Cinco de Mayo

Cinco de Mayo is a holiday of great importance to Mexican and Mexican-American communities. It is named after

the “Battle de Puebla” on May 5, 1862, which erupted during the French occupation of Mexico. On that day General Zaragoza and his troops were victorious over the greatest military power in the world at the time. Mexicans who had previously shown little interest in their country’s future, felt pride, nationalism, and determination to defend Mexico’s sovereignty. The cry of “Viva el Cinco de Mayo!” inspired increasing numbers of Mexicans to aid their country during the war-torn years of 1863 to 1867.

By the mid-20th century, Cinco de Mayo had been overshadowed in Mexico by Mexican Independence Day, September 16. In the U.S., Cinco de Mayo had lost much of its patriotic significance and gained a more commercialized, festival quality similar to St. Patrick's Day.

Since the mid 1960s, Cinco de Mayo has given Mexican Americans an opportunity to express their cultural pride and their hopes for the well-being, dignity, and advancement of Mexico and Mexican people everywhere.



Spanish-American War

One hundred years after the sinking of the battleship U.S.S.

Maine, the United States Postal Service helped "Remember the Maine" and the Spanish-American War by issuing a commemorative postage stamp. The stamp artwork is based on a turn-of-the-century bandanna created as a souvenir.

Sent to Cuba in 1898 to protect American interests, the U.S.S. Maine was rocked by a mysterious explosion while moored in Havana harbor on February 15, 1898. More than 250 American sailors were killed.

An ensuing investigation could not determine the cause of the explosion, although popular sentiment blamed the Spanish. To stir sentiment in support of war against Spain, the American press used the popular slogan "Remember the Maine." Two months after the sinking of the battleship Maine, America declared war on Spain.



Southwest Settlement

In 1598, a Spanish expedition led by Don Juan de Oñate

created the first European road in the United States, El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro (the Royal Road to the Interior Land) and later built the first European settlement west of the Mississippi at San Gabriel. This expedition laid the foundation for 400 years of commerce and cultural exchange throughout the Southwest.

The stamp art is a photograph of La Mision de San Miguel de San Gabriel. The building, a replica of the church at San Gabriel, is located in present day Española, New Mexico, near the site of the original Spanish settlement.